

# Aren't morning glories a type of weed?



**Carol Dalu**  
Master Gardener

**Q**uestion: I recently saw a pretty blue blooming vine at the plant nursery called morning glory. I'm a bit confused, as I thought morning glory was a horrible weed. So I am hesitant to purchase the vine. Can you provide information on this plant?

**A**nswer: What a terrific question. There is definitely some confusion around the annual morning glory vine and the perennial weed called bindweed. Although they have similarly shaped flowers, aggressive growth habits, and they both belong to the Convolvulaceae family, they are different plants.

The morning glory vine (*Ipomoea*) gets its name from the flower's habit of opening with the first morning rays of sunshine and closing when the full heat of the day arrives. This vine is an ornamental species and is an annual, which are plants that



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PIXABAY

A morning glory bloom. The flowery vine is often mistaken for bindweed.

complete their lifecycle in one year or less. It can be planted from seeds, which are typically available in garden supply stores. The vine is a fast grower, reaching up to 10 feet or more. It has heart-shaped leaves and will easily wind its way skyward on a trellis, producing large, showy trumpet-shaped flowers. The blue "heavenly blue" morning glory is quite popular, but they come in a variety of colors, including pink, rose, purple, lavender and white. Morning Glory prefers full sun and well-drained soil, and will even tolerate poor soil. It needs little care

and providing fertilizer may cause it to grow more leaves and fewer flowers. It can easily reseed itself and spread, thus it can become a nuisance if left alone to multiply. But with regular management, if it can be controlled.

As for the weed called bindweed (*Convolvulus*), it is also a flowering vine, but it's one of the most common noxious weeds in the Pacific Northwest. To add to the confusion, it is often referred to as wild morning glory, along with other names such as cornbind, or creeping Jenny. It is a perennial, which is a non-woody plant that

lives for more than two years and sometimes for many years. It was introduced to the United States from Europe in 1739, and before 1900, the U.S. Department of Agriculture had recognized it as a national menace. Initially, it appears as a thin threadlike vine that is wrapping itself tightly around every other plant and anything in its path. Eventually, it will produce leaves, which are shaped like an arrowhead. After the leaves appear it will start producing trumpet-shaped flowers, which are either white or pink. Bindweed grows



Bindweed climbs up a stack of wood.

from rhizomes and has a very deep root system, making it very difficult to dig up and remove. It also produces an abundance of seeds, which can remain dormant in the soil for years. It is very hardy and tenacious, almost impossible to remove. Should you find bindweed in your garden you will want to be very aggressive about removing it. There are several methods:

- Repeatedly prune it back to the ground whenever it appears.

- Plant the area with another plant that spreads densely to compete with the bindweed, thus forcing it out.

- Pour boiling water on the plant and 2-3 feet around the plant to kill its root system.

- Treat with herbicides.

As you can see, it is easy

to get these two plants confused – both have trumpet-shaped flowers, both are fast growing vines, and are often referred to by the common name of morning glory. But they are very different plants, one being one of the most noxious weeds and the other a pretty summer annual. If you are interested in the showy blooming plant for your garden make sure you are buying the morning glory vine (*Ipomoea*).

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*Do you have a gardening question? Please email, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardeners Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541-236-3052, or 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension.*